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RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 2247
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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 2018
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DUSHANBE 001687

SIPDIS

SIPDIS DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/CEN

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SUBJECT: NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE TAJIKISTAN DIRECTOR GRANTED SIX MONTH VISA; NOT OUT OF THE WOODS YET

REF: A: SECSTATE 149413, B: DUSHANBE 1650

CLASSIFIED BY: Tom Hushek, Deputy Chief of Mission, U.S. Embassy Dushanbe, STATE.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: The Tajikistan Director of the National Democratic Institute has been issued a six-month, multiple entry visa, after having received short-term visas for several months.

The six-month visa was a prerequisite for obtaining registration for the National Democratic Institute. Embassy pressed the Tajik government repeatedly for issuance of such a visa, and this news represents a success for us (Reftel A). However, new complications in the registration process for non-governmental organizations may still make it impossible for the National Democratic Institute to register and begin programming in Tajikistan. The Tajik State Security Committee continues to monitor and harass Institute employees. End Summary.

One Hurdle Crossed, and Another Appears

¶2. (C) Harry Bader, the American Country Director for the National Democratic Institute, informed us on November 16 that he had received a six-month multiple entry visa the day before. This followed several months of extremely limited validity visas issued to him, despite repeated demarches by the embassy. Possession of the longer-term visa is a requirement for the Tajik government to grant official registration to foreign non-governmental organizations, and the repeated refusal of the Government to grant Mr. Bader this visa constituted a de facto rejection of registration for the National Democratic Institute.

Without official registration, non-governmental organizations cannot function or conduct programs in Tajikistan. The National Democratic Institute has been present in Tajikistan since October 2002, but without registration since late 2004, and so unable to conduct most activities it had planned. The previous Director was deported for illegal conduct unrelated to his duties with the National Democratic Institute, further complicating the organization's position here.

¶3. (C) The National Democratic Institute will now begin the registration process, Mr. Bader told us. However, Mr. Bader said that he is concerned there are yet other procedural or technical grounds for Tajik officials to deny registration. For instance, he had learned in the past few days of a Tajik government requirement that registration application packages,

to be accepted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for "legalization" before being sent to the Ministry of Justice for registration, must include full certified and notarized copies in Tajik and Russian. Given the additional requirement that non-governmental organizations get their registration packages through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and on to the Ministry of Justice within 30 days of a vote by their directors to seek registration, Mr. Bader thought it unlikely that non-governmental organizations could complete the process within the 30 day window. He suggested that this requirement from the Government was intended to give Tajik officials an excuse to deny registration to non-governmental organizations it disfavored. Bader estimated that if all international courier services worked perfectly, along with speedy translation and certification of lengthy documentation packages, the National Democratic Institute would be able to complete the application process in 29 days; but he wasn't betting on this.

Security Service Keeps the Pressure On

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¶4. (C) Mr. Bader also reported to us that on November 14, the day before his visa was issued, an employee of the State Security Committee telephoned the National Democratic Institute's Tajik Program Officer three times and questioned him about Mr. Bader's connection to the November 14 bombing in Dushanbe which killed one person (Reftel B). The Security Committee employee reportedly asked the Program Officer what Mr. Bader's reaction had been on hearing about the bombing ("did he look alarmed, excited, or pleased?"), and said that "people NDI works with" were associated with "those who made the bomb." The Security Committee employee also asked whether Bader had received "subversive training" during a previous assignment in Ukraine, questioned the Tajik Program Officer's loyalty to Tajikistan, and suggested various aspects of the National

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Democratic Institute's activities in Tajikistan were illegal. Mr. Bader commented to the embassy that these sorts of questions were the norm in State Security's periodic contacts with employees of the National Democratic Institute in Tajikistan, and he did not think that this incident represented an intensification of State Security pressure on his organization. He noted that the State Security employee who made this latest approach, and who usually approached the Institute, had recently participated in an OSCE-sponsored training program in France. Bader said the agent's name was known to Institute employees, and volunteered to provide it to embassy.

Comment: More Battles Ahead

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¶5. (C) Embassy is very pleased by the Tajik government's decision to grant the required long-term visa to Mr. Bader, and will convey our thanks to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The repeated refusal by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to grant a long-term visa to Mr. Bader, shielded the Security Committee and the Ministry of Justice from any criticism that they were refusing registration to the National Democratic Institute, and the Embassy had urged the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to stop carrying the burden for other agencies which were hostile to the National Democratic Institute's presence in Tajikistan. However good this news is, the burdensome requirement for certified translations of registration packages makes clear that the Tajik government can produce more obstacles in the way of registration of foreign non-governmental organizations. Today's news on the visa represents a step toward another battle. End Comment.

HUSHEK